

# MissouriVOTER

Volume 67 Issue 2

League of Women Voters

March/April 2006

## President's Letter

Sometimes our members wonder why the Advocacy Committee is working on some issues and not on others. Following are some of the decisions made during this session, and the reason why that decision was made:

**Stem Cell Research** – League does not have a position to either support or oppose stem cell research.

**Medical Reform** – League supports health care legislation that will strengthen the new public health care plan in 2008. LWVMO did not sign the Medicaid petition to amend statutes.

**Photo IDs required at polls** – League protects the right to vote of every citizen and opposes any encumbrance such as photo ID.

**Samuel Alito nomination** – League takes no stand on nominations for the US Supreme Court.

**Family Planning** – LWVMO joined other groups in adopting a resolution in support of family planning. A copy of the resolution signed by LWVMO, and a cover letter explaining our position, were delivered to Gov. Blunt March 28.

**HB1786 (Henke)** – this bill puts stricter limits on abortion. We oppose this bill based on our Reproduction Choices position.

**House Concurrent Resolution No. 13** - Letter was sent maker, sponsor, and leadership of both houses opposing the use of the words Christian and Christianity in this resolution.

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Council information is on page 5; be sure to get your registration in soon. We have a full day planned for you.

The Board will be meeting the day before and members are always welcome to attend.

Just another reminder, national convention is fast approaching. Several of us from Missouri are planning to attend, and we encourage others to join us.

Mary

## Moberly League member appointed to State Library post

Margaret Conroy, former president of the Moberly-Randolph County League was recently named to the position of State Librarian for Missouri. She previously served as the director at the Little Dixie Regional Libraries in Moberly and director of the Missouri River Regional Library in Jefferson City. Margaret has a Master of Arts in Library Science from Dominican University and a Masters in Public Administration from UM-Columbia.

As State Librarian, Margaret will work directly under the Secretary of State managing the budget and staff of the State Library. Her duties will include advocating for library services at the state and federal level, strategic planning for the state library and state library services, and representing the State Library at state and national levels.

"As a former Missouri library director, Margaret knows the needs and challenges faced by Missouri's local libraries, and she will serve Missourians well as an effective advocate for library services," stated Secretary of State Robin Carnahan. It is always a pleasure when leadership skills and civic participation enhanced by involvement in League are rewarded with achievements such as Margaret Conroy's appointment to this prestigious post.

## Columbia League member serves on LWVUS Membership Initiative

In an effort to stop the League of Women Voters' 30-year membership decline, the LWVUS has been working with a consultant to understand the League's strengths and weaknesses in attracting and keeping members. They discovered that while LWV has a good reputation and strong name recognition – largely stemming from their long  
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history and work on candidate forums – LWV does not have a strong, easily defined position distinct from other groups engaged in similar work in similar issue areas. This lack of clarity exists both inside and outside the organization, with both the media and members failing to explain LWV and/or its work in a consistent manner.

Based on this finding, and a complex of other insights gained from research done over the past several months, LWVUS and Spitfire Strategies have developed a pilot membership program that will test various messages and tactics in a cost-effective way. This pilot has been designed to strengthen membership recruitment, while preserving the League's focus on core activities and will be launched in five local Leagues later this year. During the pilot, participating Leagues will track the results and lessons learned. The objective is to establish membership "best practices" that can eventually be used League-wide.

The initial target group selected to test membership recruitment strategies was selected precisely because of its similarity to the existing membership. This group consists of retiring women between the ages of 50 and 65, members of the Boomer generation, which presents an opportunity to raise the League's profile with a large and growing population this year and for several years to come.

Although the consultants explored other strong potential targets – including young women and ethnically diverse groups – this group was ultimately selected based on the belief that retirement-aged women who have been civically active in the past will be compatible with the existing membership of many local Leagues and are positioned to immediately add value to the work that local Leagues are engaged in today.

In the future, LWV may seek to target different audiences for membership – men, young people, etc. – and can easily do so by developing new messages, messengers and communications

activities to recruit these audiences. The key is to tailor membership communications activities to each audience that LWV seeks to reach.

Later this year, five local Leagues will be selected to participate in a pilot project that will test the effectiveness of the following statement and promise: "Membership in the League offers personal involvement for the public good. League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement." This message draws on the values of the current membership and is tailored for the audience selected for this test. Future membership outreach initiatives can and should reach out to different audience groups using messages and tactics specifically designed for each.

A select group of thirty League leaders from across the U.S. has been recruited as "Ambassadors for Membership," to help educate League decision makers about the project during the interval from now to the end of Convention 2006.

In Missouri, Jo Sapp, outgoing president of the Columbia-Boone County league and chair of the library study committee for LWVMO, has been selected as one of the Ambassadors. Over the next few weeks she will be spreading the word about the benefits of the project and the implications for local Leagues and their membership activities.

LWVMO received a letter from the Missouri Wilderness Coalition recently stating, "A number of years have gone by since the Missouri Wilderness Coalition has engaged actively on a public land use. It now appears that such engagement may again be called for. ... We hope ... that you will agree that we should work to improve the new Forest Plan. ... Please let us know if we can enjoy the pleasure of working with you again."

If you are interested, contact Scott Merritt, in care of the MWC, P.O. Box 377, Boss, MO 65440 or (573)626-1021 or [www.mowild.org](http://www.mowild.org)

### Legislative Day March 7, 2006, report

A smaller but quite energetic and effective force of League of Women Voters were briefed first by Senator Charles Shields, Chairman of the Medicaid Reform Commission, on the current implementations of the Commission report and other improvements that are farther on down the line in the future. Sen Shields also spoke to SB588 which strengthens the sexual offender law sentencing. League has strongly supported this bill.

Senator Rita Heard Days updated Legislative Day participants on her bill SB859 which permits advance voting.

Senator John Greisheimer explained TIF (SB832) and his efforts and drive to revamp and improve it without dismantling the whole law. (One Leaguer said he was so pleased that he “finally understood TIF”).

Representative Brian Baker discussed HB1275 which establishes virtual schools and answered questions for many who were unaware of this concept and its implication to Missouri.

Otto Fajen, lobbyist, explained a bit of the uniqueness of law making, the lobby corp, school foundation finance and gave us some background on Rep. Baker and Sen. Shields and their passions for the issues they support.

From 10a.m. (when the House and Senate went into session) our directors had the floor to give us directions and talking points on legislation and hearings that were on tap for the day in each of their areas. Win Colwill urged support of HB1394 (Lowe), renewable energy resources, which needs to be voted out of committee and on to the floor for consideration. Lael Von Holt briefed us on Sen. Shield's bills SB858 and 868 which concern health technology and funds for improving patient care and SB901 which establishes The Joint Committee on Health. Elaine Blodgett and Nancy Copenhaver spoke briefly on tax issues and elections, which had been discussed earlier.

Members from Columbia, Kansas City/Jackson, Clay and Platte Counties, Mexico/Audrain County, Sedalia/Pettis County and St. Louis Leagues then planned their strategy for meeting legislators, sitting in on the House or Senate sessions and/or attending hearings. (One hearing was hilarious as well as educational though

not one with a League position.) The hearing was on cattle rustling in south Missouri. Do have a Mexico Leaguer tell you about it. Truthfully they thought they were getting in on a health care bill hearing but they did learn a lot about the subject and the “dead serious” persons who testified about solutions to a very costly problem the farmers are facing. Some solutions seemed quite funny and impractical to Leaguers but then they aren't cattle ranchers.

Lots of good comments came out about the day. Of course there was an overload of information and never enough time - no matter how fast you walk.

Thanks to Columbia and Mexico members and Mary Merritt (fudge, of course) for the goodies which do make the coffee better.

Remember to put Legislative Day on your calendar for 2007.

**Laura Worstell**

### Advocacy Committee Report

The LWVMO Advocacy Committee met March 25<sup>th</sup> and drafted and accepted the following statement to be used preceding all testimony given at House and Senate Legislative Committee Hearings:

**“The League of Women Voters of Missouri takes a position only on issues members have studied and reached consensus on. League does not support or oppose candidates for any local, state or national office.”**

Strategy for the last six weeks of this legislative session will focus action on one or two bills from each director's portfolio. As one bill is passed on to the Governor for his signature, it may or may not be replaced for action. Action Alerts may be sent as/if needed.

The Advocacy Committee is contemplating Study Groups for all local Leagues on the legislative process. Actually suggested by Maydell Senn, Legislative Chair from Columbia, to educate the new and refresh the old members' knowledge of how the “system” works and how bills get from an idea to a signed law. We don't have a calendar or study manual etc. as yet but plans are under way. *(continued on page 4)*

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The Legislative Bulletin with all updates/actions will be printed March 31, April 14 and 28 and May 12<sup>th</sup>. IF YOU WOULD LIKE A FREE E-MAIL COPY, SEND YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS to Micki at the state office at [lwvmo@yahoo.com](mailto:lwvmo@yahoo.com)

**Laura Worstell,**  
[lworstell@maain.com](mailto:lworstell@maain.com)

## **The Unfinished Business of the Equal Rights Amendment**

***“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”*** Proposed Constitutional Amendment written by Alice Paul in 1923

Thirty-five states have ratified the ERA. Just three more are needed. In Illinois, three state senators are holding up ratification. There's action in Florida and West Virginia. It's been introduced in the Missouri legislature every year since 1998, but women must turn the Missouri legislature around to be one of the three states still needed.

The only constitutionally protected right that U.S. women now have is the right to vote. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment is the only place women are mentioned in the Constitution. All other women's rights rest on legislation that can be repealed, ignored, or not funded. Enforcement of Title IX, which guarantees gender equity in public education, has already been defunded and the Act itself is under continued attack by conservative Congresspeople.

The “equal protection” clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment is not enough. It was not until 1971 that the Supreme Court finally applied it to sex discrimination, but to this day the court has left it up to the woman to prove that the discrimination is unreasonable.

Discrimination continues. According to a 2005 report from the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), at current rates of change, it will be 50 years before women achieve equal pay and nearly 100 years before women gain equal representation in Congress. The fact that a simple statement of equality is still so controversial proves

its necessity. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said: “To think that the U.S. Constitution doesn't make that basic statement when almost every post-World War II constitution does, says something about our society.”

More that 100 nations have such a constitutional guarantee of equal rights. Contact the national ERA campaign: [www.eracampaign.net](http://www.eracampaign.net)

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**Judith Smart, LWVMO ERA**

## **Mexico League members study problems of meth production in rural areas**

This past year Mexico-Audrain County League of Women Voters conducted a series of three public forums as part of the local study "Meth use in Audrain County."

The forums centered around three topics providing information presented by guest speakers, followed by time for questions and answers. East Missouri Task Force and Highway Patrol Officer Rich Ferrari and Audrain County Sheriff Stuart Miller presented the First Forum "Meth in Audrain County."

This was followed by a second forum in November entitled "Meth and the Law". Presenters included Prosecuting Attorney Jason Lamb, Senator Cauthorn, and Representative Steve Hobbs. Also in attendance were Twelfth District Judges Sutherland and Hamlet, who added informal comments.

The Forums were concluded in January with a summary of interviews conducted by members concerning the impact of meth use on the workplace. Speakers for the third session, who addressed the topic "Meth: Preventing and Treating Addiction," were Mexico School Resource Officers Jim Willer and Jason Staddie and Garrit DenHartog, from Missouri Recovery Project.

**Emogene Fox**

League of Women Voters of Missouri  
Council 2006  
Columbia, Missouri  
April 29, 2006

Tentative AGENDA

9:00 – 9:15	Registration	
9:15 – 9:30	Call to order, Welcome & Introductions President's Remarks	Mary Merritt
9:30 – 9:35	League Ambassador Project	Jo Sapp
9:35 – 10:25	Legislative Reports Guide to State Action Candidate Forum Planning Local League Reports	
10:30 – 11:45	Our Judicial System	Mary Rhodes Russell, Judge Missouri Supreme Court
12:00 – 1:30	Lunch Obstacles to Child Immunizations Presentation Rachel Farr Fitch Health Care Award	William Altemeier, M.D.
1:35 – 2:00	_____	Melissa Carr, President Secretary's Council on Library Deve lopment
2:00 – 2:45	State Studies Library Charter Schools	
2:45 – 3:00	Wrap Up	

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**Registration Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ League \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Cost - \$25.00 includes lunch. Make check payable to LWVMO and mail to 8706 Manchester Road, Suite 104, St. Louis, MO 63144.

**Reservations must be received by April 24, 2006.**

### **Raise Funds and Have Fun Traveling**

The LWVMO has made arrangements with Travel Concepts International to encourage groups to book travel through their company. For each League member and their guests that book travel plans with Travel Concepts, the company will pay \$50, which will be split between LWVMO and the local league.

You can call them at 1-800-762-4216, or navigate their website at [www.tcitravel.com](http://www.tcitravel.com). Plans can be made on the website by destination or travel dates.

The Missouri VOTER is published bi-monthly by the League of Women Voters of Missouri (St. Louis)

Subscriptions are \$2 per year.

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Periodicals postage paid at St. Louis, MO 63144

USPS 593-960

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

Missouri Voter, LWVMO

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### **2006 Elections are coming**

**We urgently need a Voter Service person on the Board.** The LWVMO office is already busy working on plans for candidate forums for the U.S. Senate race and State Auditor. Nothing is firmed up yet, but watch for details. We will be doing the *Voters Guide* for both the August primary and the November general elections.

On the local level, we encourage each League to find ways to register voters, host candidate events for your U.S. Congressman, State Senator and Representative and all of your local elected officials.

At this time, it appears that there will be many ballot issues that we as League members will need to be informed on, so that we can help inform the rest of the voters. League's mission is to send an educated voter to the polls, and we have our work cut out for us.

There is no such thing as an "off-year" election; those officials elected this year are just as important as those elected in presidential election years.